

Tuesday, July 05, 2011

EMT-Sartain - July 2011 Report

TARTU

In 1994 I made my first visit to Tartu, Estonia with Tatiana Filappova and saw many university students lingering around the city (it was summer break) and I decided that this must be a place where the Lord was expecting us to introduce His Son. Over the years since we have seen numerous people willing to go to Tartu to teach. The Granbury church sent early short term workers and then supported the first 3 families (Eric Cimuchowski, Dennis Hofshield & Brandi Kendall) that worked longer term and helped with funds for the Bible Study Center and apartment. (I would like to give individual credit to each person who helped over the years but it would be a very long report). Today we have a congregation that meets each Sunday. Until almost a year ago Ron and Judy Warpole worked there (sponsored by McDermott Dr. Plano, TX.) but they returned to the States last year, Jaime Banks and Stephany Tibbles have been living and working in Tartu for the past year.

Since the Warpoles left our team of teachers have alternated via video-conferencing with Nikolai Vasjutin (And others) from Tallinn in preaching for the congregation. Two weeks ago Ron and Judy were able to return for a visit and Ron baptized three young folks, (see pictures). two brothers and a sister, (Koit, Kaido and Alli Assumets). Their mother is contemplating her decision now. We are very excited with these three being added to the church. Pray for their continued growth in the Lord. We are hopeful that individual studies via video conferencing will continue with teachers from the states.



The group at the baptism



Koit



Kaido



ALLI



Some of the Tartu young folks with camp shirts



Camp Balchyoca (BALtic CHristian Youth CAmp)

Sunday afternoon (July 3, 2011) began the 17th annual Bible camp in Tallinn. Over 150 will attend camp this year and my thoughts go back 17 years as Kate Gridneva and I sat down and began dreaming of a camp for kids during the coming summer. We rented an old Soviet Pioneer campground and recruited folks from the Rolling Hills congregations to join in the dream and in 1995 the camp began. Over 100 kids from Russian, Estonian & American backgrounds came to camp. Teachers & counselors from Rolling Hills came and the result was that a camp in three languages began.

The Rolling Hills folks did an excellent job in adjusting to the challenges of a Bible camp with kids who did not speak the same language.

Clinton (Deacon & Mission Chairman at Rolling Hills) & Belinda Bunch along with Butch and Suzanne Roberts from Rolling Hills led the original groups. Suzanne made every camp session for 16 years. Butch made most of those years too.

We changed campgrounds three times because the first campground (very rustic) was being renovated. It was West of Tallinn near Paldiski (former Soviet Nuclear Sub base) During the third & fourth years Rolling Hills folks (Elders Clancy King, Duane Mckinney) continued to lead the camp after I was able to locate another campground. The fifth, Sixth and Seventh years were at a different campground East of Tallinn (toward St. Petersburg). The Folks from 4th & Elm in Sweetwater, Tx. brought teachers and counselors and we added (for two years) an additional week of camp for Teens. These three years the group was led by Billy and September Whisenant with Elders, (Wendell Whittenburg, Jerry Riggs) Deacons, & Bible teachers (around 60 people, including our daughter Lori Riggs) from Sweetwater doing a wonderful job, following up on the great job that the Rolling Hills folks had done. Joe Bagby & Ed Emerson directed the camp during this time. (Some RH folks joined the Sweetwater group).

Many congregations have helped fund the camp over these years and have had folks join in teaching. (among them have been Holly Lake, Tx; Pinetree in Longview, TX.; Granbury, TX, Singing Oaks, Denton, TX and others). Over the past few years the folks at McDermott Rd in

Plano, TX has done a great job assisting and encouraging the Asunduse (Tallinn) congregation as they took over the planning, directing and most of the teaching. Early campers, Jr. counselors and members (under the direction of Nikolai Vasjustin) have led the camp & done most of the teaching over these past few years.

The congregations in Tartu and Tallinn are filled with young kids that have grown into adults who attended camp during these years. During the past 8 years or so the camp is back at the renovated campground that was used the first two years. Now it is a campground unrivaled by any campground found in the USA. The camp has been used by the editor of the Local newspaper as helping bridge the gap between two ethnic groups who had been at odds with one another during/ after the fall of the soviet Union and Estonia had gotten its independence. The editor wrote a 1/2 page article in the paper with the title "And the Yankees came" and went on to say that more had been done in the short time of the camp to bring the two groups together than years of other activities.

In the early years it was necessary for me to purchase (wherever I could locate) food for the campers and staff and to hire cooks, doctors (Required by law) and arrange for buses to transport campers to and from the campground and now all that is taken care of by the campground administrators (A Estonian government department). For the next few weeks after camp the cities of Tallinn and Tartu will have kids wearing camp "T-shirts" around town as has been the case for the past 17 years at this time of year.

This just some of the wonderful work done by you who have supported our work over the years for which we are so very grateful.

We Love and appreciate each of you !!!

Royce & Loveta